

### **REMARKS**

The Official Action mailed November 17, 2003, has been received and its contents carefully noted. Filed concurrently herewith is a *Request for Two Month Extension of Time*, which extends the shortened statutory period for response to December 14, 2003. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that this response is being timely filed.

The Applicants note with appreciation the consideration of the Information Disclosure Statements filed on March 24, 2000, September 5, 2001, November 30, 2001, July 18, 2002, February 24, 2003, and March 17, 2003. However, the Applicants have not received acknowledgment of the IDS filed on December 19, 2000. The Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner provide an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 evidencing consideration of the above-referenced IDS.

Claims 2-43 were pending in the present application prior to the above amendment. Claims 14, 28 and 43 have been canceled, claims 2-13, 15-27 and 29-42 have been amended to better recite the features of the present invention and to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors. Accordingly, claims 2-13, 15-27 and 29-42 are now pending in the present application, of which claims 2, 7, 15, 21, 29 and 35 are independent. For the reasons set forth in detail below, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

The final Official Action dated July 14, 2003, rejects claims 2-43 as obvious based on the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,210,050 to Yamazaki et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,140,548 to Zimmer, and U.S. Patent No. 5,488,000 to Zhang et al., either alone or in combination with one or more of the following references: U.S. Patent No. 5,372,860 to Fehlner et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,365,080 to Yamazaki et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,313,076 to Yamazaki et al., and U.S. Patent No. 5,913,111 to Kataoka et al. In response, the Applicants have preliminarily amended the independent claims of the present invention. The Applicants respectfully submit that Yamazaki '050, Zimmer, Zhang, Fehlner, Yamazaki '080, Yamazaki '076 and Kataoka do not teach or suggest all

the features of the independent claims, as amended; therefore, a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be maintained. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are in order and respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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